

For Immediate Release

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## **American Diabetes Association: Diabetes Management in Schools Act Will Help Ensure Oklahoma Students with Diabetes Are Safe at School**

*ADA fought hard for legislation, signed into law Thursday, to ensure that children with diabetes in public schools have equal educational opportunities*

Oklahoma City, OK (June 1, 2007) – The American Diabetes Association (ADA) today applauded the recent signing of the “Diabetes Management in Schools Act,” legislation that will help ensure that Oklahoma public schools are responsive to the medical and educational needs of students with diabetes. The ADA, including volunteers throughout the state, was a leading supporter of the bipartisan legislation, which will allow school personnel to be trained in diabetes care appropriate for the student and allow students with diabetes to self manage their disease on school property. Diabetes management is accomplished with blood glucose monitoring, administration of insulin and other medications, as well as proper nutrition and exercise. Many children are able to handle their own daily care, while some may need adult assistance. Representative Doug Cox (R-Grove), was the original author of the legislation, which also had the support of Speaker Lance Cargill (R-Harrah), Senate President Pro Tempore Mike Morgan (D-Stillwater), and Co-President Pro Tem Glenn Coffee (R-Oklahoma City).

“It is vital that all Oklahomans unite to manage, treat, educate and cure this disease. The only way to avoid, or minimize, potentially costly and deadly diabetes complications is to aggressively and proactively manage the disease 24/7,” said Melissa DeShazo-Atnip, a parent of a child with type 1 diabetes and the Co-Chair of the ADA's Family Resource Network in Oklahoma City. “Diabetes does not magically go away at the steps of the schoolhouse. Because of this legislation, our children will finally feel medically safe at school and parents will have peace of mind knowing their kids truly are being cared for. Additionally, school personnel will have the training, tools, and resources they need to welcome our children with diabetes into their classrooms.”

The Diabetes Management in Schools Act establishes that a diabetes medical management plan be developed by the student’s health care team so his or her needs and the school’s responsibilities are clearly stated. The bill states that while the school nurse has the central role in the provision and coordination of diabetes-related care at school, school personnel who wish to volunteer as “volunteer diabetes care assistants” will also be trained to provide supplemental diabetes care, particularly when the school nurse is unavailable.

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Additionally, the bill ensures that schools are open toward blood glucose monitoring, offering students the ability to monitor in the classroom or wherever they happen to be. The bill also addresses insulin administration, whether it is performed by the student or a properly trained school staff member.

Said Rep. Doug Cox, the bill's author: "Effective diabetes management is crucial for the immediate safety of students with diabetes, for their long-term health, to ensure that students with diabetes are ready to learn and to participate fully in school activities and to minimize the possibility that diabetes-related emergencies will disrupt classroom activities. The passage of this legislation will enable schools to ensure a safe learning environment for students with diabetes."

ADA volunteers were active in urging the legislature to pass the bill. It was personal for volunteers like Lisa Robertson of Edmond, who had first-hand experience trying to secure care in school for her 6-year-old daughter Anna. After she developed diabetes in December 2006, Robertson was terrified to leave her daughter at school because there is no nurse on site and no one was trained at the school to assist her daughter in her daily diabetes management. Robertson spent six weeks in her daughter's kindergarten class until volunteers at the school were trained to help manage Anna's diabetes while at school. Although this Edmond school did voluntarily agree to cooperate, many other children in Oklahoma have not had the same level of cooperation.

"By passing this bill, our legislature has taken a major step to ensuring that children living with diabetes in Oklahoma will have every chance to be safe at school and have the same educational opportunities as other children," said Gil Morris, Chair-Elect of the Tulsa County Leadership Board of the American Diabetes Association. "I am proud that Oklahoma has taken the initiative and I hope it leads to other states doing the same for their children with diabetes."

ADA credited a number of legislators for helping to secure the bill's passage.

Speaker Cargill said, "As the number of American children living with diabetes grows, the need for care in schools will continue to increase. I'm very pleased that we are able to provide this assistance to our students."

Added Senate President Pro Tem Morgan: "Students with diabetes deserve this assistance at school so they can spend more time concentrating on learning and less time out of the classroom to manage their condition."

Co-President of the Senate Coffee said: "This legislation is very exciting. Coping with this serious, chronic disease is difficult for our children already. They should be able to attend school knowing that they will have

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the proper care and same educational opportunities that their peers do. We need to ensure that students with diabetes can learn in a healthy and safe environment. This bill goes a long way toward making that a reality for children with diabetes throughout Oklahoma.”

Diabetes is one of this nation’s most prevalent, debilitating, deadly and costly diseases. Nearly 21 million American children and adults live with diabetes today, another 54 million have pre-diabetes. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, one in three Americans born in 2000 will develop diabetes in their lifetime if current trends continue.

The American Diabetes Association is the nation’s leading voluntary health organization supporting diabetes research, information and advocacy. The Association’s advocacy efforts include helping to combat discrimination against people with diabetes; advocating for the increase of federal diabetes research and programs; and improved access to, and quality of, healthcare for people with diabetes. The Association’s mission is to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes. Founded in 1940, the Association provides service to hundreds of communities across the country. For more information please call the American Diabetes Association at 1-800-DIABETES (1-800-342-2383) or visit [www.diabetes.org](http://www.diabetes.org). Information from both these sources is available in English and Spanish.

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